

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method comprising the steps of:
transmitting a request to purchase a ticket to travel from a specified departure location to a specified destination location within a specified time range;
receiving a commitment for carriage that satisfies said request but does not specify a departure time;
accepting said commitment for carriage; and
receiving at a time subsequent to said commitment an identification of said departure time.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of accepting said commitment for carriage includes one of reserving a ticket or purchasing a ticket.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said transmitting a request includes transmitting a request to purchase a ticket for a group of two or more travelers.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said receiving a commitment for carriage includes receiving a commitment for carriage that further does not specify a price term.
5. The method of claim 3, further comprising the steps of:
transmitting a bid for said ticket; and
receiving an acceptance of said bid.

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6. The method of claim 5, wherein said bid is a guaranteed bid.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein said receiving a commitment for carriage includes receiving a commitment for carriage that further does not specify an airline.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein said receiving a commitment for carriage includes receiving a commitment for carriage that further does not specify a parameter selected from the group consisting of a departing airport, a destination airport, a total travel time, a number of stops, and a number of plane changes.
9. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of receiving a ticket without a departure time printed thereon.
10. The method of claim 9, wherein said step of receiving at a later time an identification of said departure time includes receiving a ticket with said departure time printed thereon.
11. A method comprising the steps of:
- receiving a request to purchase a ticket to travel from a specified departure location to a specified destination location within a specified time range;
 - querying a central reservation system to determine a special fare listing that satisfies said request but does not specify a departure time;
 - receiving said special fare listing;
 - booking a ticket relating to said special fare listing;
 - receiving at a time subsequent to said commitment an identification of said departure time; and

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19. The method of claim 18, wherein said step of receiving at a later time an identification of said departure time includes receiving a ticket with said departure time printed thereon.

20. A method comprising the steps of:

creating a special fare listing for air travel to a specified destination location from a specified departure location within a specified time range, said special fare listing excluding a specified departure time;

making available said special fare listing via an electronic reservation system;

examining a plurality of flights which would fulfill the specified terms of a ticket relating to said special fare listing to determine which of said plurality of flights to select for said ticket, each of said plurality of flights including a specified departure time;

selecting one of said plurality of flights; and

providing notification of flight information, including a specified departure time, corresponding to said selected flight.

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21. The method of claim 20, wherein said step of examining a flight is performed after booking of said ticket.

22. The method of claim 20, wherein said step of examining a flight is performed prior to booking of said ticket.

23. The method of claim 21, wherein said booking of said ticket specifies groups of two or more travelers.

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24. The method of claim 20, wherein said creating a special fare listing includes creating a special fare listing that further does not specify a price term.

25. The method of claim 23, further comprising the steps of:
receiving a bid for said ticket; and
transmitting an acceptance of said bid.

26. The method of claim 24, wherein said bid is a guaranteed bid.

27. The method of claim 20, wherein said creating a special fare listing includes creating a special fare listing that further does not specify an airline.

28. The method of claim 20, wherein said creating a special fare listing includes creating a special fare listing that further does not specify a parameter selected from the group consisting of a departing airport, a destination airport, a total travel time, a number of stops, and a number of plane changes.

29. The method of claim 20, further comprising the step of:
upon booking of said ticket, printing a ticket without a departure time indicated thereon.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein said step of providing notification includes the step of printing a ticket with said departure time indicated thereon.

31. A method comprising the steps of:

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receiving a special fare listing for air travel to a specified destination location from a specified departure location within a specified time range, said special fare listing excluding a specified departure time;

providing said special fare listing to a buyer;

receiving a booking of a ticket corresponding to said special fare listing from said buyer;

transmitting said booking information to an airline;

receiving an identification of a flight selected by said airline which fulfills the terms of said ticket, said selected flight including a specified departure time.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein said airline includes a revenue management system.

33. The method of claim 31, wherein said booking of a ticket is limited in terms of availability to groups of two or more travelers.

34. The method of claim 31, wherein said buyer is a travel agent.

35. The method of claim 31, wherein said receiving a special fare listing includes receiving a special fare listing that further does not specify a price term.

36. The method of claim 35, further comprising the steps of:
after providing said special fare listing but before receiving a booking of said ticket, receiving a bid for said ticket from said buyer; and
transmitting an acceptance of said bid to said buyer.

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37. The method of claim 36, wherein said bid is a guaranteed bid.

38. The method of claim 31, wherein said receiving a special fare listing includes receiving a special fare listing that further does not specify an airline.

39. The method of claim 31, wherein said receiving a special fare listing includes receiving a special fare listing that further does not specify a parameter selected from the group consisting of a departing airport, a destination airport, a total travel time, a number of stops, and a number of plane changes.

40. A method comprising the steps of:

receiving a booking of a ticket to a specified destination location from a specified departure location within a specified time range, said ticket excluding a specified departure time;

examining a plurality of flights which would satisfy the specified terms of said ticket to determine which of said plurality of flights to select for said ticket;

selecting one of said plurality of flights; and

providing notice of said selected flight, wherein said selected flight includes a specified departure time.

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41. The method of claim 40, wherein said receiving a booking of a ticket includes receiving said booking limited to groups of two or more travelers.

42. The method of claim 40, wherein receiving a booking of a ticket includes receiving said booking from a central reservation system.

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43. The method of claim 40, wherein said receiving a booking of a ticket includes receiving said booking from an airline reservation system.

44. The method of claim 40, wherein said step of examining a plurality of flights includes examining an actual quantity of tickets booked within a fare class on each of said plurality of flights relative to a forecasted quantity of tickets booked within said fare class.

45. The method of claim 44, wherein said step of selecting a flight includes selecting a flight for which said expected quantity of tickets booked exceeds said actual quantity of tickets booked.

46. The method of claim 40, wherein said receiving a booking of a ticket includes receiving a booking of a ticket that further does not include a specified airline.

47. The method of claim 40, wherein said receiving a booking of a ticket includes receiving a booking of a ticket that further does not specify a flight parameter selected from the group consisting of a departing airport, a destination airport, a total travel time, a number of stops, and a number of plane changes.

48. The method of claim 40, further comprising the steps of:
analyzing route-based information for actual flights; and
allocating inventory to a special fare listing relating to said ticket at a different fare/class than currently available on said actual flights, based on said step of analyzing.

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54. The system of claim 53, wherein said bid is a guaranteed bid.

55. The system of claim 49, wherein said means for creating a special fare listing includes means for creating a special fare listing that further does not specify an airline.

56. The system of claim 49, wherein said means for creating a special fare listing includes means for creating a special fare listing that further does not specify a parameter selected from the group consisting of a departing airport, a destination airport, a total travel time, a number of stops, and a number of plane changes.

57. The system of claim 49, further comprising:
upon booking of said ticket, means for printing a ticket without a departure time indicated thereon.

58. A system comprising:
means for receiving a special fare listing for air travel to a specified destination location from a specified departure location within a specified time range, said special fare listing excluding a specified departure time;
means for providing said special fare listing to a buyer;
means for receiving a booking of a ticket corresponding to said special fare listing from said buyer;
means for transmitting said booking to an airline;
means for receiving an identification of a flight selected by said airline which fulfills the terms of said ticket, said selected flight including a specified departure time.

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59. The system of claim 58, wherein said airline includes a revenue management system.

60. The system of claim 58, wherein said booking of a ticket is limited in terms of availability to groups of two or more travelers.

61. The system of claim 58, wherein said buyer is a travel agent.

62. The system of claim 58, wherein said means for receiving a special fare listing includes means for receiving a special fare listing that further does not specify a price term.

63. The system of claim 62, further comprising:
means for receiving a bid for said ticket from said buyer; and
means for transmitting an acceptance of said bid to said buyer.

64. The system of claim 63, wherein said bid is a guaranteed bid.

65. The system of claim 58, wherein said means for receiving a special fare listing includes means for receiving a special fare listing that further does not specify an airline.

66. The system of claim 58, wherein said means for receiving a special fare listing includes means for receiving a special fare listing that further does not specify a parameter selected from the group consisting of a departing airport, a destination airport, a total travel time, a number of stops, and a number of plane changes.

71. The system of claim 67, wherein said means for examining a plurality of flights includes means for examining an actual quantity of tickets booked within a fare class on each of said plurality of flights relative to a forecasted quantity of tickets booked within said fare class.

72. The system of claim 71, wherein said means for selecting a flight includes means for selecting a flight for which said expected quantity of tickets booked exceeds said actual quantity of tickets booked.

73. The system of claim 67, wherein said means for receiving a booking of a ticket includes means for receiving a booking of a ticket that further does not include a specified airline.

74. The system of claim 67, wherein said means for receiving a booking of a ticket includes means for receiving a booking of a ticket that further does not specify a flight parameter selected from the group consisting of a departing airport, a destination airport, a total travel time, a number of stops, and a number of plane changes.

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75. The system of claim 67, further comprising:
means for analyzing route-based information for actual flights; and
means for allocating inventory to a special fare listing relating to said ticket at a lower fare/class than currently available on said actual flights.

76. A system comprising:
a memory device having embodied therein information relating to a plurality of flights;
a processor in communication with said memory device, said processor configured to:
create a special fare listing for air travel to a specified destination location from a specified departure location within a specified time range, said special fare listing excluding a specified departure time;
make available said special fare listing;
examine a plurality of flights which would fulfill the specified terms of a ticket relating to said special fare listing to determine which of said plurality of flights to select for said ticket, each of said plurality of flights including a specified departure time;
select one of said plurality flights; and
provide notification of flight information, including a departure time, corresponding to said selected flight.

77. The system of claim 76, wherein said processor examines said flight after booking of said ticket.

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78. The system of claim 77, wherein said booking of said ticket is limited to groups of two or more travelers.

79. The system of claim 76, wherein said processor is configured to make available flight information that further does not specify a price term.

80. The system of claim 78, wherein said processor is further configured to:
receive a bid for said ticket; and
transmit an acceptance of said bid.

81. The system of claim 80, wherein said bid is a guaranteed bid.

82. The system of claim 76, wherein said processor is configured to create a special fare listing that further does not specify an airline.

83. The system of claim 76, wherein said processor is configured to create a special fare listing that further does not specify a parameter selected from the group consisting of a departing airport, a destination airport, a total travel time, a number of stops, and a number of plane changes.

84. The system of claim 76, further comprising:
means for printing a ticket without a departure time indicated thereon.

85. A system comprising:
a memory device having embodied therein information relating to a plurality of

flights;

a processor in communication with said memory device, said processor configured to:

receive a special fare listing for air travel to a specified destination location from a specified departure within a specified time range, said special fare listing excluding a specified departure time;

provide said special fare listing to a buyer;

receive a booking of a ticket corresponding to said special fare listing from said buyer;

transmit said booking to an airline; and

receive an identification of a flight selected by said airline which fulfills the terms of said ticket, said selected flight including a specified departure time.

86. The system of claim 85, wherein said booking of a ticket is limited in terms of availability to groups of two or more travelers.

87. The system of claim 85, wherein said buyer is a travel agent.

88. The system of claim 85, wherein said processor is configured to receive a special fare listing that further does not specify a price term.

89. The system of claim 88, wherein said processor is further configured to:
receive a bid for said ticket from said buyer; and
transmit an acceptance of said bid to said buyer.

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90. The system of claim 88, wherein said bid is a guaranteed bid.

91. The system of claim 85, wherein said processor is configured to receive a special fare listing further does not specify an airline.

92. The system of claim 85, wherein said processor is configured to receive a special fare listing that further does not specify a flight parameter selected from the group consisting of a departing airport, a destination airport, a total travel time, a number of stops, and a number of plane changes.

93. A system comprising:

a memory device having embodied therein information relating to a plurality of flights;

a processor in communication with said memory device, said processor configured to:

receive a booking of a ticket to a specified destination location from a specified departure within a specified time range, said ticket excluding a specified departure time;

examine a plurality of flights which would satisfy the specified terms of said ticket to determine which of said plurality of flights to select for said ticket;

select one of said plurality of flights; and

provide notice of said selected flight, wherein said selected flight includes a specified departure time.

94. The system of claim 93, wherein said receiving a booking of a ticket includes receiving said booking limited to groups of two or more travelers.

95. The system of claim 93, wherein said processor is configured to receive said booking from a central reservation system.

96. The system of claim 93, wherein said processor is configured to receive said booking from an airline reservation system.

97. The system of claim 93, wherein said processor is configured to examine an actual quantity of tickets booked within a fare class on each of said plurality of flights relative to a forecasted quantity of tickets booked within said fare class.

98. The system of claim 97, wherein said processor is configured to select a flight for which said expected quantity of tickets booked exceeds said actual quantity of tickets booked.

99. The system of claim 93, wherein said means for receiving a booking of a ticket includes means for receiving a booking of a ticket that further does not include a specified airline.

100. The system of claim 93, wherein said processor is configured to receive a booking of a ticket that further does not specify a flight parameter selected from the group consisting of a departing airport, a destination airport, a total travel time, a number of stops, and a number of plane changes.

101. The system of claim 93, wherein said processor is further configured to:

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ate-based information for actual flights; and

ventory to a special fare listing relating to said t

available on said actual flights.

method comprising the steps of:

ating an alias flight record based on an actual flight

name; and

making available said alias flight record for electronic

the method of claim 102, wherein said alias flight record

ough the Airline Tariff Publishing Company.

the method of claim 102, wherein said alias flight record

the method of claim 104, further comprising the step of

ceiving information relating to a booking of a ticket c

information including an identification of a customer

the method of claim 105, further comprising the step of

transmitting to said customer an actual flight number c

ng said booking.

the method of claim 106, further comprising the step of

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creating an alias flight record based on an actual flight, said alias flight
rier name; and

making available said alias flight record for electronic posting in a central

103. The method of claim 102, wherein said alias flight record is made available
posting through the Airline Tariff Publishing Company.

104. The method of claim 102, wherein said alias flight record includes a range
mes.

105. The method of claim 104, further comprising the step of:
receiving information relating to a booking of a ticket corresponding to said record, said information including an identification of a customer who booked said

106. The method of claim 105, further comprising the step of:
transmitting to said customer an actual flight number corresponding to said
after receiving said booking.

107. The method of claim 106, further comprising the step of:

transmitting to said customer a departure time of said actual flight after receiving said booking.

108. The method of claim 107, wherein said departure time is within said range of departure times.

109. The method of claim 107, wherein said steps of transmitting are performed through a travel agent.

110. A method of electronically posting in a central reservation system flight records for airline flights having discount seats available for booking, comprising the steps of:

posting an alias flight record based on an actual flight, said alias flight record excluding a carrier name;

receiving a booking of a ticket relating to said alias flight record.

111. The method of claim 110 wherein said alias flight record includes an alias flight number.

112. The method of claim 110 wherein said alias flight record includes a range of departure times.

113. The method of claim 110, further comprising the steps of:
correlating said alias flight record with said actual flight to determine said
name of said carrier; and
transmitting booking information relating to said booking of said ticket to

114. The method of claim 110, further comprising the step of:
updating inventory information relating to said alias flight record to reflect
said booking.

115. The method of claim 110, further comprising the step of:
updating inventory information relating to said actual flight to reflect said
booking.

116. A method of purchasing an airline ticket comprising the steps of:
accessing a central reservation system having stored therein an alias flight
record based on an actual flight, said alias flight record excluding a carrier name; and
booking a ticket corresponding to said alias flight record.

117. The method of claim 116, wherein said alias flight record includes an alias flight number.

118. The method of claim 116, wherein said alias flight record includes a range of departure times.

119. The method of claim 116, further comprising the step of:
receiving confirmation of said booking without receiving an identification of
said carrier.

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120. The method of claim 116, wherein said identification of said carrier is said name of said carrier.

121. The method of claim 119, further comprising the step of:
receiving confirmation of said booking without receiving a departure time of said actual flight.

122. The method of claim 121, further comprising the step of:
receiving an identification of said carrier and said departure time, a predetermined period of time prior to departure of said actual flight.

123. A system comprising:
a memory device;
a processor in communication with said memory device; and
said processor configured in accordance with program instructions in said memory device to:
create an alias flight record based on an actual flight, said alias flight record excluding a carrier name; and
make available said alias flight record for electronic posting in a central reservation system.

124. The system of claim 123, wherein said CPU makes available said alias flight record for electronic posting through the Airline Tariff Publishing Company.

125. The system of claim 123, wherein said alias flight record includes a range of

departure times.

126. The system of claim 125, wherein said processor is further configured to:
receive information relating to a booking of a ticket corresponding to said
alias flight record, said information including an identification of a customer who booked said
ticket.

127. The system of claim 126, wherein said processor is further configured to:
transmit an actual flight number corresponding to said actual flight after
receiving said booking.

128. The system of claim 127, wherein said processor is further configured to:
transmit a departure time of said actual flight after receiving said booking.

129. The system of claim 128, wherein said departure time is within said range
of departure times.

130. The system of claim 128, wherein transmission of said actual flight number
and departure time is to said customer is performed through a travel agent.

131. A system for electronically posting in a central reservation system flight
records for airline flights having discount seats available for booking, comprising:
a memory device;
a processor in communication with said memory device; and
said processor configured in accordance with program instructions in said

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134. The system of claim 131, wherein said processor is further configured to:
correlate said alias flight record with said actual flight to determine said
name of said carrier; and
transmit booking information relating to said booking of said ticket to said
carrier.

135. The system of claim 131, wherein said processor is further configured to:
update inventory information relating to said alias flight record to reflect said
booking.

136. The system of claim 131, wherein said processor is further configured to:
update inventory information relating to said actual flight to reflect said
booking.

137. A system for purchasing an airline ticket comprising:
a memory device;
a processor in communication with said memory device; and
said processor configured in accordance with program instructions in said
memory device to:
access a central reservation system having stored therein an alias flight
record based on an actual flight, said alias flight record excluding a carrier name; and
book a ticket corresponding to said alias flight record.

138. The system of claim 137, wherein said alias flight record includes an alias
flight number.

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139. The system of claim 137, wherein said alias flight record includes a range of departure times.

140. The system of claim 137, wherein said processor is further configured to: receive confirmation of said booking without receiving an identification of said carrier.

141. The system of claim 137, wherein said identification of said carrier is said name of said carrier.

142. The system of claim 140, wherein said processor is further configured to: receive confirmation of said booking without receiving a departure time of said actual flight.

143. The method of claim 142, wherein said processor is further configured to: receive an identification of said carrier and said departure time, a predetermined period of time prior to departure of said actual flight.

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